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SUBJECT: FRENCH SAY AGREEMENT NEAR ON EU DECLARATION ON  
TURKEY

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

1. (C) Summary: French MFA DAS-equivalent Ferrari expressed optimism on September 15 that the EU would soon come to full agreement on the text of a declaration on Turkish non-recognition of Cyprus. She downplayed the risks of a Cypriot veto, while indicating that France would continue to support references in the draft language to a UN role in a Cyprus settlement. While France supports a review of Turkish implementation of the customs protocol in 2006, Ferrari indicated that France thus far had no specific benchmarks in mind. She said that an evaluation of insufficient progress would lead to delays in opening specific chapters of the accession negotiations, but that this would not interrupt the negotiations per se. End Summary.

2. (C) Pol Deputy and poloff met September 15 with French MFA DAS-equivalent Caroline Ferrari to discuss the latest state of play on EU negotiation of a declaration on Turkish non-recognition of Cyprus to be issued prior to the beginning of accession negotiations on October 3.

3. (C) Ferrari professed optimism that the EU would soon reach agreement on the text of the declaration. She rejected any characterization of the discussions as "negative," contending they were anything but and that France had received considerable support for its position. She downplayed the risk of a Cypriot veto if its demands for more conditionality were not accommodated, reiterating that agreement on a text was close. She suggested that the Cypriots would need a little time to back off their demands in order to take account of domestic political considerations. Asked whether France was at all concerned that Turkey might walk away from the accession negotiations if the text went too far, Ferrari blamed Turkey for its "faux pas" in issuing its earlier declaration.

4. (C) Pol Deputy asked whether France would allow Cyprus to remove the language in the current draft that referred to the UN efforts to facilitate a Cyprus settlement, noting it was easy to conclude that Turkey was being punished for the Cypriots' failure to approve the referendum prior to their own accession to the EU. Ferrari conceded the point, while adding that the EU had been "weak once" but should not repeat its mistake. She said France continued to support a UN role in facilitating a settlement, implying that it would also continue to support language in the declaration to that effect.

5. (C) Pol Deputy asked whether France saw a link between language in the declaration and the negotiation framework. Ferrari indicated that she did not see a need to transpose language in one into the other, although she did not rule it out. Under questioning, she indicated that the French desire for a review in 2006 would offer the means "to evaluate" Turkish progress in implementing the customs union protocol, while conceding that France was not thinking in terms of specific benchmarks. Similarly, she indicated that, while France would expect Turkish recognition of Cyprus before Turkish accession, it was not seeking mention of a specific date. More likely, she said, would be a decision not to open negotiations on certain chapters (i.e., transportation) if there were a lack of progress (for instance, on the opening of ports and airports) on implementation of the customs protocol. Pol Deputy asked whether failure to open one chapter would preclude progress on other chapters; Ferrari responded that this would not be the case.

6. (C) On next steps, Ferrari said that the UK Presidency was currently consulting bilaterally with various EU members. She noted that next week's regularly planned C